

PERSIAN GULF  
WAR

RATHER: This has been a quiet week in the Persian Gulf. A partial truce between Iran and Iraq has been effective, and Iran today made a peace-like overture to Iraq. But at the Pentagon, correspondent David Martin reports that appearances can be deceptive.

MARTIN: This is the shell-shocked lull between storms. Although the debris of war is everywhere in these pictures of the Iraqi front, the cease-fire against attacks on civilians is holding, but U.S. intelligence continues to pick up signs that an Iranian offensive is near. Iran has begun clearing its hospitals of all but critically ill patients, apparently in preparation for an influx of war casualties, and intercepted radio communications indicate that the Iranian attack could begin this weekend. (Iranians sing in Tehran.) Outside Tehran, soldiers are being whipped into a war frenzy. Veterans are being recalled to duty, and young boys are being issued their first boots, apparently for human wave assaults against the Iraqi defenses. But at the same time preparations for the land war go forward, Iranians are talking, at least a limited form of peace. The speaker of the Iranian Parliament said today that Iran would not attack oil tankers in the Persian Gulf if Iraq ceased its attacks on ships loading oil in Iran's Kharg Island. U.S. experts doubt Iraq will go along unless Iran first agrees to let Iraq resume oil exports from its southern ports, which have been blockaded since the start of the war.

JOHN HUGHES (State Department spokesman): Iran would agree to a reciprocal cease-fire against all shipping, and port facilities in the gulf, explicitly including those of Iraq, we would warmly welcome and support the development.

MARTIN: Pentagon officials say Iran is ready to resume its attacks on oil tankers at any moment. Hawk anti-aircraft missiles have been moved up to defend airfields from which previous attacks have been launched, and revolutionary guards have reinforced small islands in the Strait of Hormuz which could be used as bases for harassing or attacking ships entering the gulf. U.S. analysts admit they have lost confidence in their ability to predict what will happen next, but officials continue to prepare for the worst, and are now considering ways to strengthen air defenses around Kuwaiti oil facilities, which could be the target of Iranian air raids. David Martin, CBS News, the Pentagon.